

IT'S FIVE

IN A ROW!

Slough triumph after superb first half

WYCOMBE and Slough local derbies seldom fail to produce excitement and Saturday's Rothmans Isthmian League encounter at Wexham Park was no exception. There were four great goals in the first 45 minutes and some tremendous football with the Rebels deservedly snatching the winner in the second half. It was their fifth successive victory over the Blues.

I felt Slough earned their three points but they were lucky in the last minute when Wanderers gave them a real let off. Ian Pearson headed over the crossbar from four yards and with it went the Blues' last hope of sharing the spoils. Perhaps an equaliser would have been a little unjust, for the home side dominated the second half during which time

Slough Town 3, Wycombe Wanderers 2 REPORT BY STUART EARP

Wycombe fell away disappointingly.

There could be no complaints in the first 45 minutes, however. Wanderers led twice with cracking goals from Howard Kettleborough and Dylan Evans only to see their arch rivals hit back with equally good goals. In between the scores there was some excellent football from both sides in what was almost a repeat of the corresponding game last season when Slough prevailed 4-3, and that after trailing 1-3.

Slough's display on Saturday made a mockery of their early season form which left them floundering at the foot of the table. On this performance they could be in the honours come the end of the season. Although there are flaws in the back four, their midfield and front men are brimming with skill and effort.

It was in midfield that the match was won and lost. Wycombe's trio did well in the first half but then disappeared into obscurity as the match wore on. In contrast Roy Davies kept the Rebels' momentum at its peak. I made Davies man of the match — not for his two goals but for his allround contribution to the game. He's something of a crowd pleaser too, although I doubt if the Wycombe fans appreciated his antics.

Up front Slough caused Wycombe's defence countless problems. They have a good blend — two running forwards with a good deal of skill and the tall and powerful Keiron Somers as the target man. Paul Lee exposed the lack of pace of Dave Bullock at right back while Somers often outjumped Keith Mead and twice he produced goals. On the other flank young Dave Russell was always menacing and combined beautifully with Somers. It was Russell in fact who provided the crosses for

two of the goals and this winger must have a great future ahead of him. It is surprising no one spotted him sooner during his days at Flackwell Heath last season.

Wanderers had players to match the Slough men in some departments. Kettleborough, for instance, was Wycombe's answer to Somers and he did a great job despite taking a fair amount of 'stick' from the two Slough centre backs. Too often though, there was no-one supporting him.

Perhaps the Blues would have been happier with their usual team for they brought Paul Birdseye into midfield in place of the injured John Priestley and called up Bullock to right back. Dave, always a trier, was clearly unhappy in the number two shirt and although Birdseye kept Terry Reardon quiet in midfield, this is not his best position.

Bullock's plight was all too apparent in the later stages and I was surprised manager Ted Powell did not bring on his substitute Alan Davies. He might have put some life into a flagging midfield while Birdseye would have been free to return to his full back position.

At the start Wanderers looked happy enough. Mead won a string of free kicks against Somers and the Blues were soon moving smoothly. Trevor Porter saved at the feet of Pearson after five minutes and the Blues went ahead seven minutes later with a fine goal. Mead picked up a corner clearance and fed Evans on the flank. Dylan beat two defenders in a run along the byeline and then squared the ball low and hard. Kettleborough met the ball first time and sent it high into the roof of the net.

Wycombe's early dominance was not to last, however. Tim Turl curled a shot just over and then Lee got his foot to a cross before John Maskell and watched the ball roll slowly towards the line and come to rest at the foot of an upright. Bullock hastily cleared. The pressure was intense at this stage and it was no surprise when Somers rose high at the far post to head Alan Gane's cross firmly past Maskell into the corner.

Slough might have had two more goals in the next five minutes but after that spell they slowed the pace and let Wanderers off the hook by playing the ball square at the back and taking too long to build attacks. It gave Wycombe breathing space — and they made the most of it.

In the 38th minute Kettleborough beat Turl's challenge and took the ball wide before floating over a cross. Pearson went up and was beaten to the ball which bounced out to Evans on the edge of the box. Dylan leant back and cracked home a glorious goal with Porter helpless. A minute later the 'keeper did well to save Holfield's shot at point blank range.

Wanderers looked good value for a half time lead but Davies had other ideas. In the 43rd minute he met Russell's cross with a flying volley and sent the ball rocketing into the net past Maskell, who could hardly have seen it.

The standing ovation from the crowd at the end of the half summed up the superb entertainment but the pace had to slow after the break and it was Slough who took the honours. First to the ball time and again, they showed a greater appetite for the game and grew in confidence.

The third and winning goal came after 64 minutes and was similar to their first. Russell was again allowed space for the cross and once more Somers towered above Mead at the far post. This time, he headed back across goal and Davies took the ball down, pushed it sideways and then unleashed a shot that flew into the net off an upright. Wycombe's defence looked at sixes and sevens and the space given to both Russell and Davies was their undoing.

It was the first time the Rebels had been in front and their midfield men ensured they would not release their lead.

Denied good possession in the middle, Wycombe's forwards were given a lean time and Porter had only to collect a couple of crosses and the occasional back pass, until the very last minute, that is.

It was then that Wycombe threw away a golden chance of stealing a point. The ball came across to Kettleborough with Slough's defence stretched. He clipped over a cross to two unmarked Wycombe men by the far post but Pearson got underneath his header and the ball went over the top.

Referee Hedges blew for full time 30 seconds later and signalled Wycombe's fifth defeat in five matches against Slough Town.

SLOUGH: T. Porter; T. Turl, J. Beyer, D. Malley, R. Underwood; R. Davies, T. Reardon, A. Gane; P. Lee, K. Somers, D. Russell. Sub H. Vandenberg (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; D. Bullock, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; H. Kennedy, P. Birdseye, M. Holfield; I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough, D. Evans. Sub A. Davies (not used).

Referee: D. Hedges (Oxford).

Half-time: 2-2. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Kettleborough (12), Evans (38). Slough — Davies 2 (43, 64), Somers (28).

Attendance: 1,700.